

Medication

Most asthma medicines are taken with an inhaler, but some medicines are in pill form. If you use an inhaler, it is very important to learn how to use it correctly. Be sure to talk to your doctor about proper inhaler use and about possible side effects of your medicines.

There are two types of asthma medication:

Controller medicines reduce irritation in the airways. They help prevent the onset of asthma attacks but do **not** provide quick relief of symptoms. They work best when taken every day and as prescribed. Some of the controller medications that your doctor may prescribe are inhaled corticosteroids, inhaled long-acting beta2-agonists, or leukotriene modifiers. Talk to your doctor before stopping this kind of medication.



Quick relief or rescue medicines quickly relax tight muscles around the airways to allow you to breathe more easily. They are used to relieve symptoms

before exposure to certain asthma triggers, such as exercise. Everyone with asthma needs a quick-relief medicine. (Your doctor may refer to these medicines as inhaled short-acting beta2-agonists.) If your quick relief or rescue medicine is needed more than two times per week, your asthma may not be well-controlled. Talk to your doctor.

Over time, the type and amount of medicine you need may change. Changes will be based on how often you experience asthma symptoms and the severity of these symptoms. The results of breathing tests may also result in changes to the type and amount of medicine you take.

Asthma Action Plan

An Asthma Action Plan is a written plan that describes a person's asthma triggers, the names and doses of asthma medicines to be taken, and what to do during an asthma emergency. Work with your doctor or your child's doctor to develop an Asthma Action Plan. If your child has asthma, be sure to share this Asthma Action Plan with his or her school nurse.

For a blank copy of an Asthma Action Plan or for more information about asthma, contact the Health Information Line at 401-222-5960 / RI Relay 711 or visit www.health.ri.gov/asthma

Keeping Asthma Under Control

Asthma is a chronic disease of the airways. The airways are the tubes that carry oxygen in and out of the lungs. When someone with asthma is exposed to an asthma trigger, their airways can become swollen or inflamed and the muscles of the airways can tighten. These changes can limit the flow of oxygen into the lungs and make it hard to breathe.



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Asthma Triggers

Asthma attacks are triggered by **allergens, irritants, and aggravators**. Know and avoid your asthma triggers.



Controlling Asthma

Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled. You can control your asthma by taking three important steps:

- Know and avoid your **asthma triggers**.
- Take all **asthma medication** as prescribed by your doctor.
- Have an **Asthma Action Plan**.

Allergens

An allergen is anything that can cause an allergic reaction. Ask your doctor about allergy testing to accurately diagnosis allergies. This will help you better manage your asthma. Some allergens that trigger asthma include:

Dust Mites

Dust mites are found in rooms with carpeting, upholstered furniture, curtains, bedding, and stuffed toys. Encase pillows, mattresses, and box springs in allergy-proof covers. Dust and vacuum often with a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) vacuum and wash bedding weekly in hot water. Remove stuffed animals and toys (unless they can be washed).



Pests

Cockroaches and rodents need food and water to live. Store food in sealed containers and clean crumbs, dirty dishes, and other sources of food waste as soon as possible. Fix leaks as soon as possible and use garbage cans with lids.



Pets and Other Animals

Keep animals with fur or feathers out of bedrooms and bathe them weekly. This includes dogs, cats, hamsters, rabbits, and birds. If possible, remove these animals from your home.



Pollen

Pollen is seasonal and affects people at different times of the year. Close windows and use air conditioning if possible. Do not hang laundry outside on high-pollen days.



Mold

Too much moisture can create problems with mold and mildew. This is especially true in bathrooms, kitchens, and basements. Make sure your bathroom exhaust fan is on when showering and do not over-water houseplants. Use a dehumidifier and remember to empty and clean the container regularly.



Irritants

Asthma irritants are things in the air that can trigger asthma. Some asthma irritants include:

Smoke

If you smoke, quit smoking. While you are trying to quit, do not smoke in your home or in your car.



Aerosols

Do not use scented products such as perfume, aftershave, cologne, air fresheners, or strong-smelling cleaning products.



Air Pollution

During the summer, ozone is a major air pollutant. Listen to weather reports and stay inside when ozone levels are high. Close windows and use air conditioning on these days, if possible.



Pesticides, Insecticides, and Weed Killers

These chemicals should only be used if all other methods of pest, insect, and weed removal have been tried and did not work. Anyone with asthma should not be around when these products are used and for several hours after they are used.



Aggravators

Other things that can trigger asthma are known as asthma aggravators. Some common aggravators include:

Viral Infections that Lead to Cold or Flu

Viruses can live on dry surfaces for several days. Wash your hands frequently or use antibacterial gels. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. This is how viruses enter your body.



Exercise

Exercise is very important. Everyone with asthma can still be active. Some people with asthma can do strenuous exercise, such as distance running. Others with asthma may have to choose activities with built-in rest periods, such as baseball or softball, or less strenuous activities, such as walking or light biking. Swimming and dancing can also include rests. Always warm up before exercising. Take quick relief asthma medication between 15 and 20 minutes before exercising, if recommended by your doctor.



Cold Air

The airways of someone with asthma can close when they go from an area with warm air to an area with cold air. This usually happens in the winter when someone goes outside. You can warm the air you breathe outside by covering your nose and mouth with a scarf. If possible, stay indoors on very cold days.



www.health.ri.gov/asthma